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Assessment of the results achieved in realizing aims and objectives of the International Year of Ecotourism

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits to the members of the General Assembly a report prepared by the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/40 of 30 July 1998 and General Assembly resolution 53/200 of 15 December 1998.

Summary

The present report was prepared by the World Tourism Organization in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/40 and General Assembly resolution 53/200. It outlines the activities undertaken by States Members and major international organizations in preparation for, and during the International Year of Ecotourism. The report presents, in its first part, all the activities carried out by the World Tourism Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and other international organizations in preparation for and during the Year. In a second part, the report synthesizes the activities undertaken by Governments within the framework of the International Year of Ecotourism. The information is structured according to six main themes: national policy, activities and publications, stakeholders' participation and support, awareness, regulation and cooperation. The last part of the report provides detailed information on follow-up activities and outlines recommendations for further action.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to the request made to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/200 of 15 December 1998 and the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/40. It concerns:

(a) Programmes and activities undertaken by Governments and interested organizations during the International Year of Ecotourism;

(b) An assessment of the results achieved in realizing the aims and objectives of the Year, particularly in terms of encouraging ecotourism in developing countries;

(c) Recommendations to further advance the promotion of ecotourism within the framework of sustainable development.

Background of the International Year of Ecotourism

2. The General Assembly, by its resolution 53/200, proclaimed the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. At its seventh session, held in New York in April 1999, the Commission on Sustainable Development gave a mandate to WTO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to assume responsibility for the International Year of Ecotourism and adopted a resolution inviting Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to organize activities in preparation for the Year.

3. The text proclaiming 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism referred specifically to Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. All States were invited to contribute to the Year through discussion papers and their own activities, in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of ecotourism as a contribution to sustainable development, and in particular for the less developed countries.

4. In the preparation of and during the International Year, WTO and UNEP aimed at involving all the actors in the field of ecotourism, with the following four objectives in mind:

(a) Generate greater awareness among public authorities, the private sector, the civil society and consumers regarding ecotourism's capacity to contribute to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in natural and rural areas, and the improvement of standards of living in those areas;

(b) Disseminate methods and techniques for the planning, management, regulation and monitoring of ecotourism to guarantee its long-term sustainability;

(c) Promote exchanges of successful experiences in the field of ecotourism;

(d) Increase opportunities for the efficient marketing and promotion of ecotourism destinations and products on international markets.

5. The official launching ceremony of the International Year of Ecotourism 2002 was held at United Nations Headquarters on 28 January 2002. The event was attended by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, the WTO Secretary-General, Francesco Frangialli, the UNEP Executive Director, Klaus

Töpfer, the Seychelles Minister of Tourism and Transport, Simone de Comarmond, who chaired the session, the Mexican Minister of Tourism, Leticia Navarro, and the then President of The International Ecotourism Society, Megan Epler Wood. It also involved the participation of several Government ministers, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the United Nations, and representatives of leading industry associations and non-governmental groups.

II. Activities undertaken by the World Tourism Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and other international organizations

6. The World Tourism Organization undertook various activities in preparation for and during the International Year of Ecotourism at different levels, as follows:

A. World Tourism Organization recommendations

7. In line with the first three objectives (see para. 4), WTO recommended to its 139 member States, in September 2000, that they undertake activities at the national and local levels, such as:

(a) Define, strengthen and disseminate as appropriate, a national strategy and specific programmes for the sustainable development and management of ecotourism;

(b) Provide technical, financial and promotional support for and facilitate the creation and operation of small and medium-sized firms;

(c) Set up compulsory and/or voluntary regulations regarding ecotourism activities, particularly as they refer to environmental and sociocultural sustainability;

(d) Establish national and/or local committees for the celebration of the Year, involving all the stakeholders relevant to this activity;

(e) Inform the WTO secretariat of the activities planned for 2002 requesting, if appropriate, whatever support they deemed necessary.

8. During 2001 and 2002, more than 50 member States sent information on their national activities, published on the WTO International Year of Ecotourism 2002 web site. Details on these activities are presented in section III of the present report.

B. Regional conferences

9. Ten regional WTO conferences were successfully organized between March 2001 and April 2002 for the exchange of experiences, examination of problems, promotion of cooperation nationally, regionally and internationally and identification of future challenges. The conferences were structured according to the same four themes as those for the World Ecotourism Summit, namely:

Theme 1: ecotourism planning and product development: the sustainability challenge;

Theme 2: monitoring and regulation of ecotourism: evaluating progress towards sustainability;

Theme 3: marketing and promotion of ecotourism: reaching sustainable consumers;

Theme 4: costs and benefits of ecotourism: a sustainable distribution among all stakeholders.

10. The preparatory meetings were held in Mozambique for Africa, in Brazil for the Americas, in Kazakhstan for Commonwealth of Independent States member countries, in Austria for Europe, in Greece for Mediterranean Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, in Seychelles for island destinations, in Algeria for countries with desert areas, in Maldives for the Asia-Pacific region, in Moscow for Russia and neighbouring countries and in Fiji for the South Pacific islands.

11. In total, over 3,000 stakeholders, representing public sector tourism and environmental authorities, non-governmental organizations, ecotourism businesses, academic institutions and independent experts, participated in these preparatory meetings, at which some 200 case studies were presented.

12. WTO also organized, jointly with UNEP, a web Conference on Sustainable Development of Ecotourism during April 2002, in which nearly 1,000 people from 88 countries participated. The prime objective of the conference was to provide easy access for a wide range of stakeholders involved in ecotourism to exchange experiences and voice comments, especially for those who had not been able to attend the regional preparatory conferences that had taken place previously.

13. In order to contribute to the preparation of the World Ecotourism Summit, UNEP organized or participated in preparatory events involving over 3,000 stakeholders. These meetings were held in India for non-governmental organizations and grass-roots organizations (with Ecological Tourism in Europe), in Belize for Central America (with The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)), in Seychelles for small island developing States and other small islands (with WTO), in India for South Asia (with TIES), in Peru for South America (with TIES), in Thailand for South-East Asia (with TIES), in Kenya for East Africa (with TIES), in Sweden for the Arctic Circle (with TIES) and in Austria for Europe (with WTO).

14. The experience and results gained from all these regional meetings and the web conference were used as a basis for discussions at the World Ecotourism Summit held in Québec, Canada, in 2002. (All final reports and conclusions of these conferences and seminars are available on the International Year of Ecotourism web page: http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/RegionalEcotourismConferencesSeminars.htm.)

C. World Ecotourism Summit

15. The Summit was the principal event marking 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism and the culmination of a one-and-a-half-year preparatory process. An initiative of WTO and UNEP, the Summit was hosted by Tourisme Québec and the Canadian Tourism Commission.

16. It was held in Québec City, Canada, from 19 to 22 May 2002, with the participation of 1,169 delegates from 132 different countries, representing public, private, non-governmental organization, academic and research institutions, intergovernmental, national and international development and aid agencies, as well as local and indigenous communities and individual experts. The participants included 30 ministers of State and senior officials from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNEP, UNDP, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, WTO, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Global Environment Facility, the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Union.

17. The main outcome of the Summit was the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism, a document that was prepared through wide consultation at the Summit and which contains general guidelines, as well as stakeholder-specific recommendations for the sustainable development of ecotourism. The final version of the Québec Declaration and a comprehensive final report, including the summaries of the regional, thematic and stakeholder-specific sessions of the Summit, is available in print (A/57/343, annex) and also on the Internet (www.ecotourism2002.org). These publications were submitted to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, as official documents. More than 10,000 copies of the Québec Declaration have thus far been distributed at numerous events, including the Johannesburg Summit.

D. Other activities

18. In line with the fourth objective of the Year, WTO participated in various fairs and published a set of market studies on ecotourism.

1. Ecotourism activities at tourism and trade fairs

19. In addition to all the preparatory conferences and seminars and the World Ecotourism Summit, WTO participated in special ecotourism activities or workshops at various tourism and trade fairs, as follows:

- Reisepavillon (Hanover, Germany, January 2002). WTO, jointly with the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) convened the Forum International with the participation of public authorities, ecotourism companies and experts. WTO and GTZ subsidized the participation of more than 50 small suppliers of ecotourism products and services from 20 developing countries.
- Feria Internacional del Turismo (FITUR) (Madrid, February 2002). WTO organized a special session on ecotourism for Latin American member States. Since its beginning, FITUR has represented a meeting place for public and private organizations of Latin American countries. Ecotourism development and management is a key factor in assuring the sustainable development of tourism in Latin America, and the region is a major supplier of ecotourism products and destinations for the European outbound ecotourism market. The special relevance of the meeting was also confirmed by the high number of tourism professionals (approximately 200) who participated in it.
- International Adventure Travel and Outdoor Sports Exhibition (Chicago, Illinois, United States of America, February 2002). The exhibition is a

specialized tourism event that attracts professionals and public interested in the adventure travel, ecotourism, outdoor sports and other related tourism activities. WTO supported the event, participated as exhibitor and delivered a presentation at a parallel ecotourism conference.

- International Tourism Exchange (ITB) (Berlin, March 2002). In connection with the International Year of Ecotourism 2002, ITB included a special "Sustainable Travel Exchange — Travel with Sense" exhibition, in which WTO participated. It featured a wide range of initiatives and tourism attractions that emphasize environmental and social sustainability. Visitors found initiatives by international tour operators and smaller suppliers, as well as model tourism products from over 50 countries.

- EXPO-ECOTURISMO 2002, Ecotourism Exhibition and Trade Show (10-11 September 2002, Caracas). WTO supported the event, participated as an exhibitor and delivered a presentation on the results of the World Ecotourism Summit.

2. Ecotourism Market Study Series

20. In order to evaluate the trends and size that characterize the main ecotourism generating markets, WTO published seven pioneer country reports on Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom and United States markets. Since it is a comparative study, in each country a common definition of ecotourism and a similar methodology have been used.

E. Special publications for the International Year of Ecotourism

1. World Tourism Organization publications

21. In order to contribute to the dissemination of good practices worldwide and of existing recommendations related to ecotourism, WTO prepared or contributed to the following special publications for the International Year:

- *Compilation of Good Practices in the Sustainable Development of Ecotourism*. The publication comprises 55 case studies from 39 countries, presented in a systematic form, drawing lessons that can be applied at other destinations. It is the second volume within the series of Good Practices published in the area of sustainable development of tourism. The sustainability aspects are further detailed according to specific elements of ecotourism such as conservation, community involvement, interpretation and education, as well as environmental management practices.

- *Guidelines for the Sustainable Development and Management of Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas* (revised edition, jointly with UNEP and the World Conservation Union (IUCN)). The guidelines aim to build an understanding of protected area tourism and its management. They provide both a theoretical structure and practical guidelines for managers.

- *International Ecolodge Guidelines*. WTO sponsored and contributed to this publication by the International Ecotourism Society, which incorporates the latest research and techniques available, providing guidance from the day an idea is conceptualized to when the ecolodge is built and operating. The book is

an invaluable resource for anyone associated with ecolodges or other nature-based accommodations and facilities.

- *Final Report of the World Ecotourism Summit*. This publication contains the summaries of the preparatory conferences, the conclusions of all Summit sessions, the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism and other technical documents presented at the event.
- *Compilation of Good Practices in Small Ecotourism Businesses*. Published in 2003, this third volume within the WTO Good Practices series contains 64 case studies from 47 countries.

2. United Nations Environment Programme publications

- *The UNEP Manual for the International Year of Ecotourism*, containing orientation for parties interested in collaborating with the Year. The manual has been posted on the UNEP web site.
- A double issue of the *Industry and Environment Review* on Ecotourism, including articles presenting successful ecotourism experience from all parts of the world.
- A handbook *Ecotourism: Principles, Practices and Policies for Sustainability*, with basic background data and references for Governments and practitioners, jointly produced with the International Ecotourism Society.
- A CD-ROM, published jointly with WTO, distributed at the World Ecotourism Summit, with all preparatory conference reports, keynote addresses and 72 presentations from delegates.

F. World Tourism Organization web site

22. A special page was created on the WTO web site: http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE-Main-Menu.htm. The page, which is regularly updated, contains all the material regarding the activities related to the International Year of Ecotourism.

G. World Tourism Organization events

23. WTO also supported several international, regional and national ecotourism events during 2001 and 2002, in which WTO representatives delivered technical presentations. In the national conferences that have been held since the Summit (in Sri Lanka, Bulgaria, Hungary, Spain, Venezuela, Romania, Brazil and Portugal), WTO has assisted Governments in adapting the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism to the particular conditions of each country, thus helping to implement the Summit's recommendations. In the following regional and international events, WTO promoted the application of the Year's results to specific ecotourism-related issues and programmes:

- ECOAQUA — International Conference on Ecotourism in Water Areas, held from 16 to 19 October 2002, at Mondariz-Balneario, Galicia, Spain

- 2002 Ecotourism Association of Australia International Conference (with UNEP), held from 21 to 25 October 2002, in Cairns, Tropical North Queensland, Australia. This was the closing event for UNEP activities. The Cairns Charter on Partnerships for Ecotourism seeks to support the establishment and operation of ecotourism partnerships
- Eighth Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, held from 18 to 26 November 2002, in Valencia, Spain
- International Adventure Travel and Outdoor Sports Show (IATOS) Conference on Ecotourism and Adventure Travel, held on 19 and 20 February 2003, Chicago, Illinois, United States
- Symposium on Natural Resource Conservation and Economic Development in the Congo Basin: The Role of Ecotourism, held on 21 February 2003, in Washington, D.C.
- Workshop on ecotourism development at the National Park and World Heritage Site of Ahaggar and Tassili, held on 10 and 11 March 2003, in Djanet, Algeria.

H. Global projects linked to the International Year of Ecotourism

24. Global projects related to the International Year include:

- The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as part of its mandate within the international programme on sustainable tourism development under the Commission on Sustainable Development process, has developed a set of international guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development. The draft guidelines, together with a booklet containing their main features, were presented at the World Ecotourism Summit in May 2002. Thereafter, the guidelines have been tested through three case studies for their applicability and effectiveness. They will be transmitted for adoption, as well as to elicit recommendations for future work to be undertaken on this issue, to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Kuala Lumpur in April 2004.
- The World Travel and Tourism Council has been engaged in various initiatives that are linked to ecotourism, such as the report on Corporate Social Leadership in Travel and Tourism and the Tourism Industry Report prepared for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, among others.
- The Ecotourism Databank (http://tourismdatabank.colorado.edu/), established by the Centre for Sustainable Tourism at the University of Colorado, supported by UNEP, WTO and the United States Forest Service, is a searchable online library on ecotourism, containing relevant documents and presentations on ecotourism.
- The Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, managed by the Rainforest Alliance through the support of the Ford Foundation, is proposing a global accreditation body for sustainable tourism and ecotourism certifiers. See http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/sv/stsc-monthly-activities.html.
- The World Legacy Awards (http://www.wlaward.org/awards.htm) managed by Conservation International and the National Geographic Society.

- WWF International published, in July 2001, the *Guidelines for Community-based Ecotourism Development*. They are available online at: http://www.wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/community_based_ecotourism.pdf.

III. Activities undertaken by Governments

25. Before and during the International Year of Ecotourism, numerous countries organized special events, put in place new policies and developed intersectorial and international cooperation and many other activities.

26. The information for the following analysis was obtained through a specific worldwide survey conducted by WTO among national tourism authorities between January and May 2003, as well as from the communications of WTO member States reporting on ecotourism-related activities throughout the Year and the WTO Tourism Market Trends 2002 survey, which included a specific section on ecotourism aspects.

27. A total of 93 Governments informed the World Tourism Organization on the activities carried out by them during the International Year: 19 from Africa, 18 from the Americas, 12 from East Asia and the Pacific, 27 from Europe, 10 from the Middle East and 7 from South Asia. A list of responding countries can be found in the annex and summaries of country reports are available on the following web site: http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/iye/results.

28. The information received on national and local activities carried out in the framework of the International Year has been carefully examined and is summarized below according to the following themes: national policy; activities and publications; stakeholder participation and support; awareness; regulation; and cooperation.

A. National policy

1. International Year of Ecotourism national committees

29. Following the recommendations of WTO, 47 national and local tourism authorities established committees for the celebration of the Year, involving all the stakeholders relevant to this activity: 14 in Africa, 12 in the Americas, 4 in the Middle East, 5 in Europe, 6 in East Asia and the Pacific and 6 in South Asia (see annex).

30. Most of these committees include similar stakeholders at different levels, such as national tourism authorities, normally as initiator and president of the Committee; other ministries or government agencies, principally for culture and heritage, environment, foreign affairs, cooperation, economy, trade, development or the forest department, but also for communication, agriculture, decentralization, scientific research, biodiversity, meteorology, mines and geology, and sport; foundations or non-governmental organizations (environment, ecotourism, development, cooperation); private sector: tour operators, travel agents, hotel owners and their trade associations; local or regional authorities (mainly tourism officials); tourism boards; national bodies for protected areas; local community representatives; environmental or ecotourism associations; universities or academicians; tourism

trade organizations; hotel trade national federations or chambers; national representatives of international conservation organizations (e.g. The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, WWF); and the media.

31. Some committees also include other stakeholders, such as national social economic councils, intergovernmental organizations, funding institutions, tourism observatories, national funds or councils for tourism promotion, national indigenous agencies, etc.

32. Some countries without national ecotourism committees for the Year, developed other mechanisms to undertake ecotourism activities during 2002. For example, Slovenia and Zimbabwe have a National Committee for Sustainable Development, which deals with ecotourism among other activities; in Colombia and Georgia, ecotourism activities focused on protected areas. Thus, national parks' authorities were in charge of organizing such activities; in Samoa, the Government set up a National Biodiversity Strategic Action Planning Committee that covers ecotourism matters; and in Hong Kong SAR and Oman, various ministries worked together to promote ecotourism.

33. In general, a large majority of the International Year of Ecotourism national committees were established to develop and organize activities for 2002. However, in order to support ecotourism development in the future, most countries decided to maintain their committee and to pursue its activities. Some countries, such as Azerbaijan or the Czech Republic, have not yet set up any national ecotourism committee, but are planning to establish one in the future.

1.2. National strategy for ecotourism

34. While the establishment of national ecotourism committees is aimed at undertaking activities in this field, setting up national strategies for ecotourism reflects a deeper involvement of these countries vis-à-vis ecotourism.

35. In all, 48 countries defined, or are currently defining, a national strategy or plan for ecotourism development in their territories (8 in Africa, 12 in the Americas, 8 in East Asia and the Pacific, 13 in Europe, 3 in the Middle East and 4 in South Asia). There are, of course, differences in the way these strategies are established in those countries. Around a third of them have clearly developed a separate strategy for ecotourism, focusing on different aspects.* Some others have included ecotourism as one of the main segments of a more general tourism strategy (Cambodia, Ecuador, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Sweden or Uruguay), of the tourism chapter within the national economy development strategy (Lithuania), of the nature tourism strategy (Portugal), or of a rural tourism strategy (Morocco).

36. Ecotourism policies in some countries (Argentina, Georgia, Spain) are mainly managed by bodies in charge of protected areas. Some countries (Syrian Arab Republic) make reference to an expansion of green areas or to a greening programme for tourism areas (Mauritius). Others (Bangladesh, Egypt, Jamaica, Oman) have no national plan, but refer to regional or local strategies or programmes

* For instance, Greece's national ecotourism strategy, which foresees the elaboration of a master plan which puts the emphasis on the following points: (a) priorities — choice of regions; (b) description and plan of activities; (c) constitution of a national ecotourism coordinator (Agrotourist S.A.); (d) definition of criteria of ecotourism development; (e) promotion campaign for ecotourism; (f) pilot applications; (g) publications and events; and (h) exchanged of know-how and experience with other countries.

for ecotourism. Other countries (Lebanon, Madagascar and Panama) are not currently setting up any ecotourism strategy, but will present a project of such a strategy in the future. Yet, other countries (Bolivia, Russian Federation and Hong Kong SAR) have a general strategy for the sustainable development of tourism, which applies to ecotourism issues as well.

B. Activities and publications

37. The development of national committees and/or strategies for ecotourism was generally conducted in parallel with the organization of various events and the production of publications relating to ecotourism management.

1. Activities and events organized for the International Year of Ecotourism

38. In order to contribute to the international debate on ecotourism during the Year, many national Governments organized events at the international, national, regional or local levels. The regional distribution of those events worldwide is quite homogenous, even if Africa, the Americas and Europe have witnessed more activities. Typical activities undertaken include: national or regional congress, seminar or workshop; international seminar or conference; launching of ecotourism project or programme; World Tourism Day celebration on ecotourism; launching ceremony for the International Year of Ecotourism; exhibitions (photo, painting, etc.); sports events (e.g. cycling or trekking tours); local workshop or celebration; national or international fairs; conference in national parks and other protected areas (including inauguration of a new national park); regional, national or international festivals (food, music, traditional arts, etc.) related to ecotourism; ecotourism or nature tourism award ceremony (national or regional); national public debate; and good practices contest.

39. Participants represented all types of stakeholders, including other international or intergovernmental organizations, such as UNEP, UNESCO, WTO, The International Ecotourism Society and the World Conservation Union. The themes frequently associated with ecotourism in those activities included mountain tourism, rural tourism, agrotourism, protected areas, community-based tourism, cultural tourism, traditional handicraft conservation, nature conservation, ecolodge, sustainable tourism, poverty alleviation, etc.

40. The International Year of Ecotourism was also an occasion to develop partnerships. Some events were celebrated jointly with the International Year of Mountains 2002 and others were coorganized by two bordering countries (e.g. Guinea with Senegal). Many States, whether they organized ecotourism activities or not, reported that they participated in conferences and seminars prepared by other countries and also in the World Ecotourism Summit in Québec. They also supported many events organized by non-governmental organizations and associations. Some countries mentioned that they already planned to organize other ecotourism events in 2003 or beyond.

2. Publications

41. States produced various types of publications in the framework of the International Year. According to the information received, Europe has been the region with the most written outputs, followed by the Americas. As could be

expected, and in view of the numerous activities undertaken worldwide, final reports and other outputs (announcement, declarations, charters, etc.) represent an important part of the publications produced during the Year.

42. Other outputs for the Year published by different countries around the world can be summarized as follows: inventory of the principal ecotourism sites, facilities and attractions; publication of national ecotourism guides (included sometimes in a more general tourism guide); publication of national or regional ecotourism strategies, plans or programmes (as a whole or summarized); guidelines on ecotourism development (focusing on the specificity of the country: desert areas, wetlands, etc.) for communities, for local bodies or for business operators, such as ecolodge; guidelines for tourists on responsible tourism (i.e. diving, trekking, adventure, etc.); publication of the proceedings of national ecotourism conferences, seminars and workshops; special promotional posters, CD-ROMs, videos (e.g. on national parks), web sites, etc.; articles on ecotourism in ecotourism or related magazines or in the national press; market research on national or regional ecotourism markets (and also on rural tourism); regional maps with ecotourism and other attractions; publication on ecotourism development in national parks; national speeches presented at the World Ecotourism Summit or other international conferences; and ecotourism impact studies.

43. The International Year of Ecotourism was an occasion for some Governments to commission special studies on ecotourism (market, feasibility or consultancy studies at the national level or for certain regions, etc.) to be published in the near future. They also supported university publications, such as theses dealing with specific aspects of ecotourism development. Some of the outputs from Governments were prepared in order to be distributed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg.

44. Tourism authorities (ministries or tourism boards) were usually associated with other bodies for these publications, sometimes through the national committees they formed. These bodies included universities, research centres, other ministries (economy, environment, culture), national parks authorities, nature associations, institutes of geography, etc. Ecotourism was often dealt in association with other themes, including environmental protection, agrotourism or rural tourism, mountains, poverty reduction, etc., thus demonstrating its many linkages.

C. Stakeholders' participation and support

1. Stakeholders' participation

45. The United Nations system in general, and the World Tourism Organization in particular, has always encouraged national authorities to develop participative mechanisms in their activities. The creation of national committees for the International Year of Ecotourism was certainly a most important tool for this purpose: many countries mentioned it as the main consultative organ on ecotourism questions. Nevertheless, more actions regarding stakeholders' participation were conducted before and during the International Year.

46. Some countries (Botswana, for example) made extensive efforts to ensure that all stakeholders, government agencies, communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector were given the opportunity to express their

opinions at each phase of the preparation of the national strategy or plan for ecotourism. Participation of communities is considered not only necessary in ecotourism policy construction, but as its main justification. Workshops intended for regional or local authorities and indigenous or local communities seemed to be used quite regularly, while a few countries, such as Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, did consultation by mail. In some cases, workshops are only organized at the local level for the dialogue between local authorities and their communities. Otherwise, these local bodies and communities were invited to participate in national or international events to express their opinion (events can be specially designed for enforcing upward flow of information from civil society to national authorities, such as in Mexico with the "Ecotourism Community-based Enterprises National Encounter", or in Australia, where the Aboriginal Tourism Australia was one of the main International Year of Ecotourism partners).

47. Nevertheless, consultation about ecotourism questions can be more restricted according to the context and can be limited to contacts with experts and non-governmental organizations at the national level, or consultation of local communities for a specific local ecotourism project. One result of this consultation is that local communities are highly involved in the project management. In some countries, the execution of an ecotourism project needs the approval of the local communities, inter alia, by way of consultation with indigenous and other stakeholders in national reserves; trans-ministerial consultation; contacts with the private sector; dialogue with indigenous national associations; support to non-governmental organizations and private foundations that work with communities; and as part of a consultancy or feasibility study on ecotourism development.

48. Some countries (e.g. Puerto Rico) recognized that such consultative mechanisms were still limited, but were in a process of strong improvement. Others, such as Thailand, say that consultative bodies have been formed, but have not been properly used thus far. In general, very few States consider that regular democratic mechanisms are enough for ecotourism questions.

2. Support to the ecotourism private sector

49. One of the recommendations made by WTO during the International Year was for the national authorities to provide technical, financial and promotional support for and to facilitate the creation and operation of small and medium-sized firms. Indeed, ecotourism has to be built on a dense network of small businesses, rather than on the big concentrations that often characterize the global tourism market.

50. States, principally those from the Americas and Africa, which seem to consider tourism in general, and ecotourism in particular, as a strong component of their economies, responded to this recommendation using different methods.

51. Technical assistance to small enterprises and local communities (advice, feasibility studies, capacity-building, etc.) comes before direct financial support, which is often directed to local bodies and businesses working for specific ecotourism projects or destinations (i.e. focused on protected areas). Since some national Governments, for instance, Botswana, did not have enough funds to finance projects, they facilitated contacts between ecotourism project developers and development partners (non-governmental organizations, funding agencies, banks or donors). They also developed administrative and market facilities for local ecotourism businesses, for example, by setting up positive discrimination for

national businesses, fiscal exemption, loans with low interest and other commercial incentives (provided that businesses complied with some conditions related to environment or community participation).

52. A few countries have set up national funding programmes for tourism enterprises (e.g. Malaysia), or for young entrepreneurs (Greece). Others have organized national financing plans for small businesses in general, within a sustainable development programme (for equipment and environmental improvement, training and research, etc.). These global plans also benefit ecotourism small-sized firms. For example, in Greece, within the framework of the Operational Programme for Competitiveness, the Ministry of Development provided financial support for "Infrastructures for the attraction, management and targeted information dissemination for visitors" (pathways, observation posts, etc). In addition, 2002 was also the occasion to start new programmes focused on nature tourism or ecotourism: in Indonesia, for example, the Ministry responsible for tourism has already planned for 2003 to give financial and technical support for communities who lived around ecotourism destinations. Some States (e.g. Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles and Yemen) reported that they had not yet undertaken support actions, but planned to develop such mechanisms.

53. As far as promotion is concerned, ecotourism businesses could enjoy certain advantages from national promotional campaigns, especially when these focused on natural heritage, such as the one in Chile for example. In the framework of these campaigns, national tourism authorities or boards directly issued promotional material (postcards, posters, logo, etc.). An interesting experience was had in Hungary, where the Government organized study tours in national parks for the media. In addition, part of the technical and financial support accorded to small businesses, described previously, was dedicated to promotional purposes (web site creation, publication of advertising brochures, setting up of ecotourism business networks, ecotourism stands in foreign fairs, shouldering costs for the participation at International Year of Ecotourism events, etc.).

D. Awareness

54. In addition to the activities described in section B above, and the setting up of national ecotourism committees, which contributed strongly to developing awareness among ecotourism stakeholders, Governments undertook other actions to raise the awareness among their population and the tourists themselves.

55. Around 20 per cent of reporting countries mentioned the setting up of global awareness-raising campaigns on ecotourism or responsible tourism. These campaigns were carried out sometimes within a national ecotourism promotion operation or as part of a general campaign on environment. In these or other countries, awareness actions for local operators were also conducted and principally focused on environmental training for tourism employees and guides, by means of special workshops or leaflet distribution (including the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism (A/57/343)). Similar processes have been used for local communities, especially those living within or close to protected areas (training, guidelines for ecotourism business development, etc.). Schools and universities were also subject to particular attention from some Governments, which set up a special information campaign for teachers and students. Special attention was also paid to State

employees (police officers, national parks' agents, etc.) and to elected officials through awareness meetings.

56. For the general population, the following actions were undertaken: an environmental public march, cycling or hiking (Hong Kong SAR), clean-up campaigns (mountains, beaches), tree-planting activities, special International Year of Ecotourism lottery draw (Ecuador), free guiding services on ecotourism sites (Sri Lanka), open days in national parks for World Tourism Day (Hungary). Governments also supported or facilitated the work undertaken by associations (for environmental protection, responsible tourism or community-based tourism). In general, various means were used to spread the information: leaflets, posters, maps, videos, radio or TV programmes, exhibitions (photography contests in Chile, exhibition on environment-friendly technologies in Jamaica), ecotourism festivals, special pages in web sites, documentation during flights (Colombia), national or foreign specialized press (special supplements on protected areas), issue of special stamps (Senegal), code of conduct for tourism and environment (Cyprus, in preparation in Dubai), etc.

E. Regulation

1. Legislation

57. The present report has indicated that various countries set up national strategies in order to plan ecotourism activities. Nevertheless, a scarce minority of them voted special legislation on ecotourism. Only three of the countries that reported their International Year of Ecotourism activities to WTO mentioned law texts concerning ecotourism: Ecuador, Puerto Rico and Philippines (executive order on ecotourism). A few others (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Colombia, Mexico and Spain) have legislation mentioning the concept of ecotourism.

58. However, around 20 per cent of reporting countries declared that they foresaw the preparation of such legislation. Furthermore, there is one case of transborder legislative document for ecotourism activity in the Caucasus region currently being negotiated between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Furthermore, many countries without specific ecotourism legislation stated that ecotourism activities were regulated by various existing acts and laws. Firstly, national laws on environmental protection or national parks ordinances determined tourism and ecotourism development and management. Secondly, some countries already have tourism legislation that includes natural heritage protection and land planning, even a specific law on sustainable development of tourism (e.g. Czech Republic and Republic of Korea). This legislation can deal with forms of tourism close to ecotourism, such as agrotourism and rural tourism (Cyprus, Morocco, Uruguay), nature tourism (Portugal) or adventure tourism (Chile). In general, Governments associate ecotourism to legislation concerning the following themes: archaeology, land use planning, national Agenda 21 (Jordan, Tunisia), hunting, architecture, forest, water, natural reserves, agriculture, wetlands, cultural heritage, wildlife and coasts.

2. Certification systems and indicators

59. A voluntary approach to regulating ecotourism activities is through developing or encouraging the use of indicators, certification schemes and/or ecolabels. Very few countries have set up specific national ecolabels for ecotourism businesses. Four

have reported doing so to WTO: Ecuador, Kenya, Sweden and Thailand. Regarding ecological or quality labels and awards for general tourism, the list is a little longer: Austria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Estonia, Malta, Morocco (on rural tourism), Maldives, Peru and Spain. Other countries mentioned that some regional labels exist in their territory and that some efforts are being made to encourage the adoption of international ecolabels that already exist (e.g. Blue Flag, Green Globe).

60. Existing certification schemes concern mainly catering facilities and accommodation. They focus principally on environmental issues (energy and water-saving techniques, noise and air quality and the use of eco-friendly products and materials), but also on social ones (local community awareness) and services quality. It is to be noted that around half of the countries that do not have any certification schemes thus far intend to develop such mechanisms in the future. This reveals a strong awareness among tourism national authorities regarding the high potential of voluntary schemes for the regulation of ecotourism activities. Other countries, for instance, Lebanon and Samoa, have developed a national system for sustainable tourism indicators that is applied for monitoring ecotourism activities as well.

F. Cooperation

61. Many countries collaborated in the preparation of or participated in international seminars on ecotourism before and during 2002, notably with WTO. Some Governments have also enforced the link with international organizations or with other national Governments in ecotourism programmes.

62. One out of three countries that provided information on their International Year of Ecotourism activities stated that they had collaborated with international organizations or programmes for ecotourism development purposes. Besides WTO, other organizations mentioned include the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, The International Ecotourism Society, the World Conservation Union, WWF, the Pacific Asia Travel Association, European programmes (INTERREG), the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Bird Watching Association, Rare Centre for Tropical Conservation Adventure Travel Society, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Emigration International, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC) and the International Mountaineering Organization.

63. Similarly, one out of three countries have established an international collaboration agreement related to ecotourism with other national Governments (including between national parks authorities) for research, training programmes, ecotourism regulation, etc. This collaboration is mainly in the case of border countries, which often share protected areas, for example, Lesotho and South Africa, or Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. Nevertheless, it can also be the result of a technical cooperation between non-border States (such as between Costa Rica and Chile or Ecuador for example, for the adaptation to ecotourism of the tourism certification scheme). Cooperation can be included within a cross-boundary general development plan: for example, the Amazonian Strategic Plan or Euroregions development plans,

such as the project for the Carpathian Mountains, which involves seven countries. This form of cooperation arises from the need to alleviate the negative consequences for tourism development among others, of States and nations that are separated by frontiers, and to counteract the tendency for those areas distant from their capital cities to be neglected.

64. Many countries also benefit from the technical or financial assistance of national cooperation and development agencies: Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) (Spain), GTZ (Germany), Belgian, Irish, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada Green Fund, New Zealand or international funding agencies or organizations: the Inter-American Bank, the World Bank, the European Union, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility, etc.

Assessment of World Tourism Organization activities

65. In the final question of the survey, Governments were asked to evaluate the activities undertaken by the WTO in the framework of the International Year of Ecotourism.

66. More than half of the reporting countries (48) indicated that the activities were interesting for the international ecotourism industry, especially in developing countries where tourism and ecotourism often represented a substantial part of their economic activities. They specified that the events, publications and final recommendations helped to raise awareness worldwide. In addition, international cooperation (exchange of good practices, collaboration with international organizations and intergovernmental cooperation) was largely facilitated.

67. Around half of the countries (42) stated that the activities carried out by WTO in preparation for and during the Year were of high importance.

IV. Follow-up and recommendations

A. World Tourism Organization follow-up activities

68. **The following activities will be undertaken by WTO:**

- **Based on the results of the above-mentioned survey, a detailed publication on exemplary government practices will be prepared, containing documents and further analysis of the main results of the International Year of Ecotourism related to ecotourism policy, planning, stakeholder participation and support, marketing, regulation, etc.**
- **The collection and dissemination of good practices is being continued after the International Year of Ecotourism: a compilation of good practices in small ecotourism businesses was published in April 2003.**
- **Support for small and medium-sized ecotourism companies will be provided for the application of the recommendations of the International Year, through the above-mentioned good practice compilation, seminars and other dissemination tools, as well as through taking an active role in**

the preparations for the United Nations-designated International Year of Microcredit (2005).

- A series of ecotourism seminars for protected area managers will be organized, starting with two subregional events in Africa.

- WTO is continuing its work in the field of certification systems for sustainable tourism. It supports the process of creating the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, a global accreditation programme. The organization recently prepared a set of recommendations for Governments for supporting or creating national certification systems. In addition to the general procedure and the criteria recommendations, which are fully applicable to ecotourism operations as well, specific criteria have been included for ecotourism and suggestions have been made to facilitate the participation of small tourism businesses in certification programmes. Based on these recommendations, a series of regional seminars will be organized in the course of 2003 and 2004.

- A series of national seminars on Local Agenda 21 programmes has been initiated in 2003. The seminars involve principally municipal governments and tourism officials and promote the application of integrated tourism management systems.

- The work on sustainable tourism indicators is also continued, with a new international study expected to be published by early 2004. The resource book and manual will include specific sections on the application of indicators at natural sites and ecotourism attractions.

- A comprehensive Destination Management Network is currently being developed, which will specify the main types of tourism destinations, including natural and ecotourism destinations.

B. United Nations Environment Programme follow-up activities

69. As a follow-up to the International Year of Ecotourism, UNEP will:

- Develop guidelines and recommendations for successful ecotourism and sustainable tourism policies and strategies. The guidelines will be based on the results of six regional multi-stakeholder workshops to be held in 2003 and 2004. In 2004, UNEP will publish a handbook for Governments based on this consultative process, including an action plan for next steps in setting global standards, and a proposed financial structure for implementation of the action plan.

- Develop tools to support the implementation of the guidelines, such as:

  – A report on the links between ecotourism and sustainable tourism development, conservation of biodiversity and poverty alleviation called "Mapping Tourism Footprints" (with Conservation International and the International Institute for Environment and Development), with a series of geographic information system-referenced maps overlapping tourism investments, conservation hotpots and social variables, such as the UNDP human development index;

– Guides for small and medium-sized tourism enterprises and local authorities in developing countries, on renewable energy, waste management and Local Agenda 21 processes.

• Continue implementing demonstration projects, such as the UNESCO/UNEP project entitled "Linking tourism and biodiversity conservation in six World Heritage sites" (El Vizcaino and Sian Ka'an in Mexico, Tikal in Guatemala, Rio Plátano in Honduras and Komodo and Ujung Kulon in Indonesia). In 2003, the project will focus on training participants in public use of parks, ecotourism and nature interpretation, consolidating and disseminating lessons learned through publications and fostering public-private partnerships. The Indonesian sites will begin activities in 2003.

Annex

List of responding countries

Afghanistan
Argentina[a]
Australia[a,b]
Austria[b]
Azerbaijan[b]
Bahrain
Bangladesh[a]
Belgium
Bolivia[a]
Botswana[a,b]
Bulgaria[b]
Cambodia[b]
Chile[a,b]
Colombia[b]
Costa Rica[a,b]
Curaçao[b]
Cyprus[b]
Czech Republic
Dominican Republic[a]
Dubai
Ecuador[a]
Egypt[a]
El Salvador[a,b]
Eritrea[a]
Estonia[a]
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece[a,b]
Guatemala[a,b]
Guinea[a]
Haiti[b]
Holy See
Hong Kong SAR
India[a,b]
Indonesia[a,b]
Iran, Islamic Republic of[a,b]
Ireland
Israel[a,b]
Jamaica[a]
Japan
Jordan[a,b]
Kazakhstan[b]
Kenya[a]
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of
Korea, Republic of
Lebanon[a]
Lesotho[a]
Libyan Arab Jamahirya[b]
Liechtenstein
Lithuania[b]
Macau
Madagascar[a]
Malaysia[a,b]
Maldives[a]
Mali[b]
Malta[a]
Mexico[a,b]
Morocco
Namibia[b]
Nepal[a,b]
Niger
Oman
Panama
Peru[b]
Philippines[a,b]
Poland
Portugal[a,b]
Puerto Rico[b]
Republic of Moldova[b]
Russian Federation
Rwanda[a,b]
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Samoa[b]
Sao Tome and Principe
Saudi Arabia
Senegal[a,b]
Seychelles[a,b]
Slovakia[b]
Slovenia[b]
Spain
Sri Lanka[a,b]
Sweden
Syrian Arab Republic[a]
Thailand[a,b]
Togo
Tunisia[a]
Turkey[b]
United Republic of Tanzania[a,b]
Uruguay[a,b]
Yemen[b]
Yugoslavia
Zimbabwe

[a] Responding countries in which national or local tourism authorities established committees for ecotourism activities. WTO was informed that Brazil, the Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Fiji also have such committees.

[b] Responding countries which defined, or are currently defining, a national strategy or plan for ecotourism development in their territories (either separately or included within a more general development strategy). WTO was informed that Angola and Venezuela have also defined such a strategy.